

CLAIMS

What is claimed is:

1. A method of identifying relevant experts substantially in real-time using a search request from a user, comprising:

maintaining an updateable and searchable database of expert profiles, wherein the profiles include attributes of a particular expert;

receiving a search request from the user; and applying a weight designated by the user to the attributes of a desired expert.

- 2. The method of claim 1 further comprising: searching the database using the search request; and displaying a list of ranked experts, wherein each expert's position in the ranked list is determined by a ranking algorithm that uses the weights of each attribute.
 - 3. The method of claim 1 wherein the attribute is the expert's availability.
- 4. The method of claim 3 wherein the database automatically updates the expert's availability.
 - 5. The method of claim 1 wherein the attribute is the expert's area of knowledge.
- 6. The method of claim 1 wherein the attribute is the expert's available time until a next assignment.
- 7. The method of claim 1 wherein the attribute is the expert's proximity to the user.
- 8. The method of claim 1 wherein the attribute is the expert's available contact method.
 - 9. The method of claim 1 wherein the attribute is the expert's travel speed.

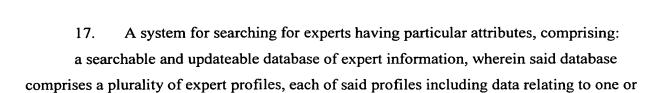
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- 10. The method of claim 2 wherein the user is automatically connected to a selected expert by interfacing with the expert's name as it appears on the displayed list.
- 11. The method of claim 2 wherein a menu appears with available contact mediums when an expert is selected.
- 12. The method of claim 11 wherein the contact medium is email and when selected a dialog box appears for the user to prepare and send an email to the expert.
- 13. The method of claim 11 wherein the contact medium is telephone and when selected the expert's telephone number is displayed.
- 14. The method of claim 1 further comprising: selecting a messaging communication mode by which the user contacts a selected expert.
 - 15. The method of claim 1 wherein the profile is able to be created by the expert.
 - 16. The method of claim 1 wherein the profile is able to be updated by the expert.

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a user interface for allowing users to identify desired characteristics of a desired expert, wherein the user interface also allows users to assign weights to one or more of the desired characteristics.

- 18. The system of claim 17 further comprising a processor for comparing a user's desired expert characteristics to the attributes stored in each of said expert profiles.
- 19. The system of claim 18 further comprising a display for displaying to the user a list of experts that fit one or more of the user's desired characteristics.
- 20. The system of claim 19 wherein the list of experts is ranked according to a correlation between each expert's expert profile and the user's desired expert characteristics, wherein the list is further ranked according to weights that the user has assigned to certain characteristics.
- 21. The system of claim 17 wherein a user interfaces with the database via a remote wireless or wireline Internet connection.

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more attributes of a particular expert; and